

Depot Town Rag

Volume 22, Number 2

March/April
2007

Tasty bits
from up and
down the
block

100%
FREE
RAG
CONTENT

A PUBLICATION OF THE DEPOT TOWN ASSOCIATION, INC. The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place, Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198

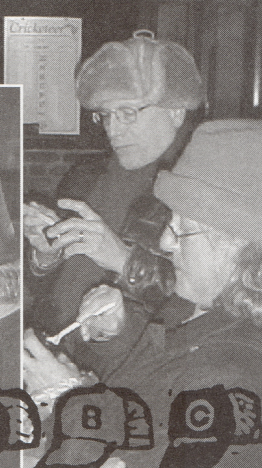
We eat with our hats on down here



CBS's Charles Osgood says it's a return to the days of Bogart and Sinatra. Marlon Brando and James Dean eschewed hats, but Leonardo DeCaprio and Johnny Depp are returning to the hat-wearing tradition.



January's Chili Challenge saw participants sampling chili at neighborhood eateries. Very few took off their hats. It's a tradition down here.



"Let's eat down at the depot" We've been doing it for 162 years

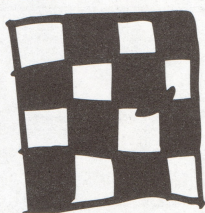
1845

S.J. Barber ran the Great Western Hotel at the railhead in Ypsilanti. "His tables," said a May 14, 1845 broadside, "will always afford an abundance of food to the hungry." But they had to tear the hotel down when the rail line extend to Ann Arbor and points west.

Barber's "Depot-Recess" was a shop in the Great Western's basement that offered "pies, cakes, crackers, fruits, nuts, cigars, Detroit Ale, soda beer, &c. with pleasant seats, affording the traveler an agreeable retreat while waiting the arrival and departure of the Cars and Stages."

The coming of the railroad

Before dining cars were made part of the consist, railroad passengers often disembarked, strolled the district, ate at early restaurants or hotels, then boarded the next train toward their destination. Townies always



found the district to be a delectable place to choose a meal. The local restaurants even had tablecloths.

1859

John Davis opened the Huron Hotel. "This house in its furnishings and appointments is second to no house in the state outside of Detroit; and in matters of convenience and comfort is surpassed by none... There is a bell to each room, and on every landing a speaking tube..." The kitchen was across the "house track" from the main hotel and the dining room was situated on the second floor to enhance its elegance and privacy.

1862

Regimental mess was served to the Fourteenth Regiment and the Twenty-seventh Michigan Infantry at Camp Mizner—today's Thompson Block— [continued overleaf]



What's for dinner?

Every commercial district needs a gimmick. "Give the people what they want" lasts a while. "Give the people what they need" lasts longer. Frozen custard and slot cars came and went and, since we don't seem to think we need railroads any more, it's a good thing folks in this block stayed in the food business.

Breakfast, lunch, and dinner are still on most people's Need List. So are cuppa Joe, brunch, luncheon, parties, snacks, banquets, happy hour, cocktails, and other forms of self satisfaction and sustenance.

You can taste your way through the neighborhood as you sample the creative ways in which Depot Town's chefs serve up a varied fare of delightful comestibles.

Watch as our food purveyors prepare to move to *al fresco* dining—on the sidewalks, on roof tops, in secret gardens, and along the railroad tracks.

There's plenty to do—and eat—as the district moves into its 163rd year of serving meals to its loyal clientele.

FAST [breaking] FOOD NEWS

In August 2006, about a dozen masked men lugged six 40-gallon trash bags full of sauce packets into a Mexican fast food outlet on South Western Avenue in Marion, Indiana, leaving a note explaining they had been accumulating them for a while and decided to give them back. They suspected they had 25,000 packets. Officials for the chain said they hand out about six billion such packets a year.

There is no fast food outlet in Depot Town, nor are there plastic sauce packets. Depot Town food is a bit slower—and some say a lot better—than the food substitutes found out on the strip.

Try the slower pace and the ambience of sit-down meals taken in a historic setting. It's good for your body and soul.



Ypsilanti Food Co-Op 312 N. River

Sarah Harvey is coordinator for the Ypsilanti Food Co-op and the River Street Bakery



One of the district's oldest traditions

In most contemporary restaurant advertising, "family dining" means no liquor license. But in old railroad districts like Depot Town, it usually meant your mom helped out in the kitchen and your uncle rented a room upstairs. Here, as in Europe, family dining means everybody sits around the table several times a day. You don't have to be related; you just have to pass the food around.

Let's eat at the depot [continued from page one]

as soldiers mustered to be sent down the railroad tracks to the War Between the States.

1884

Geo. Moorman opens the Follett

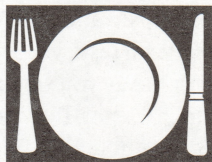
House, soon to be heralded as the first hotel to be supplied with water "from the bath house ram (up the river bed) thus supplying it with as good water as man ever drank." Moorman served food too.

1906

The Ypsilanti House becomes the Congress Hotel. When run by William H. Lewis, the house gained great prestige. "When Mr. Lewis took hold he changed the name to the Lewis Hotel which became very well known about the state as 'The Steak,' because of the delicious steaks served by our present street commissioner."

After Prohibition

Railroad taverns flourished with all the dignity of exclusive private clubs. Dad's, the Alibi, Smokey's, and the Central Bar morphed into what are now Aubree's Sa-



loon and the Sidetrack Bar & Grill. The trains stopped stopping, but the loyal local clientele did not.

1960s

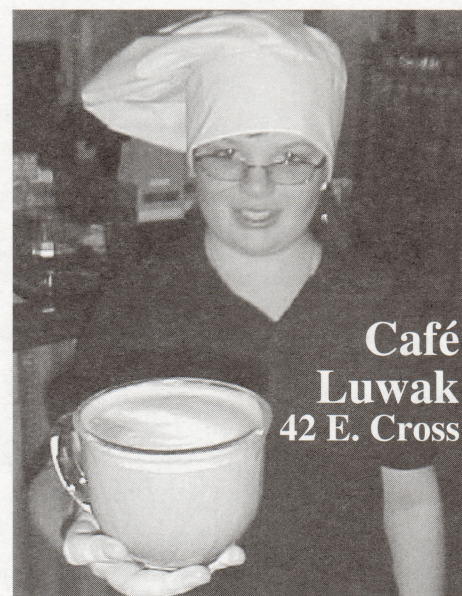
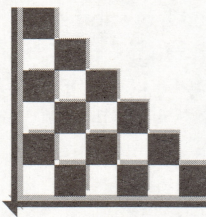
Turner's Restaurant became an anchor business on the block, later bought by John Kornilakis and renamed the Old Town Restaurant. Today that venerable space is known as Cady's Grill, a stylish dining establishment with fireplace, waterfall, and great food.

1980s

We saw short shots like The Mean Bean, The Deli Shoppe, Daily Grind Coffee House, Miller's Ice Cream Parlor, The Whistlestop, Pronto Pizza, Take Five Coffee Shop, and Tucker's Café served up the grub to a regular clientele.

Contemporary

Today's swank dining rooms, patios, and decks continue a long tradition of hospitality: Aubree's, Sidetrack, Luwak, and Cady's have become landmarks in themselves, recognized for their innovation and quality across the restaurateur community.



Café Luwak 42 E. Cross

Forrest Karnopp serves Café Luwak's favorite: their big cup of Café Mocha

At last, the story can be told: The Kopi Luwak



The Luwak (*paradoxurus hermaphroditus*) denizen of the coffee (kopi) plantations of Java, Sumatra, and Sulawesi, eats only the ripest coffee cherries. Unable to digest the coffee beans, the Luwak deposits them on the jungle floor where they are collected. The stomach acids and enzymatic action involved in this unique fermentation process produces the beans for the world's rarest coffee beverage.

Last winter Café Luwak's Jim Karnopp ordered several pounds of the exotic rodent-processed coffee for serious fans of the bitter bean. He says he'll do it again, if nobody stops him.

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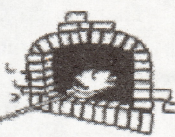
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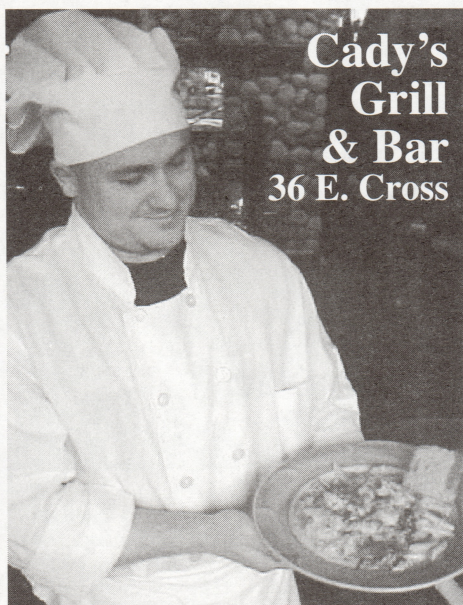
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Cady's Grill & Bar chef Nakema Minnich shows a specialty of the house: baked macaroni and cheese with broccoli and kielbasa

Old Town Restaurant's semi-precious gems are missed:

John Kornilakis's Old Town Restaurant of the 1980-90s wait staff was dominated by Opal, Ruby, Pearl, and Garnett. We did not make this up. Ask around. The Old Town has morphed into several new forms, but the memories are still here.

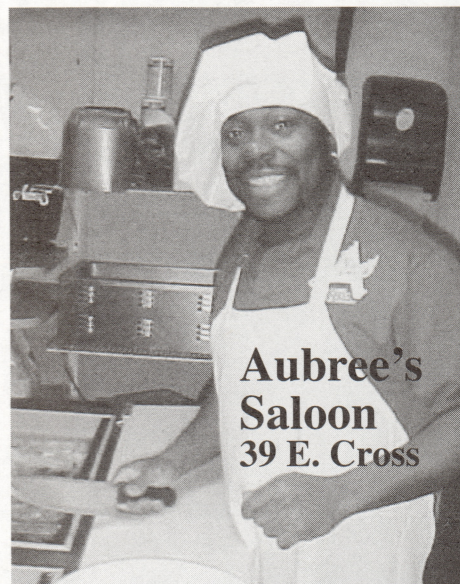


We're old-style, but not old-fashioned

Times have changed down in Ypsi's old railroad district. Today diners can access restaurants via the Internet, peruse their menu at home, place their order on a cell phone, and their food will be ready when they arrive in the neighborhood—or we'll deliver. How modern can we get?

Thoroughly modern meals in the old neighborhood:

www.aubree's.com
www.cafeluwak.com
www.cornerbrewery.com
www.sidetrackbarandgrill.com
www.queenofheartspastries.com



Kendall Thomas, head chef at Aubree's Saloon carries on a tradition at that address that has been serving up food since the 1870s

Aubree's Pizza will deliver fresh to your home or office

"We started making pizzas at the Saloon a few years ago and everyone says we serve the best pizza in Town," says Thomas.

"We make our pizza dough and sauce in-house daily, the same way artisan pizza makers did in the old world," says Aubree's manager Bob Roberts. "Our produce and meats come from the best purveyors in the industry."

Recent years have seen expansion to new stores opening around the Ypsilanti / Ann Arbor area from Depot Town to Ypsilanti Township at Glencoe Crossing and Paint Creek Crossing, and to Michigan's Upper Peninsula in Marquette.

A handy American restaurant guide: (clip and save)

Ad image	Wait staff	Menu format	Salutation	Glass ware	Dishware /utensils	Cutlery	Table cover	Table accents	Ambiance /decor
'HAUTE d' CUISINE'	Maitre'd Eduardo, sommelier, sous chef, Head Chef	Broad sheet	"Sir/Ma'm"	water, wine, coffee, apertif, something else?	monogrammed china/crystal	8+	3 layers linen	flowers, too dark candles	to tell
"FINE FOOD"	hostess, waiter, chef	big folder	non-committal	water coffee	restaurant crockery	4	1 cloth	bud vase	theme packages
"BREAKFAST, LUNCH, or DINNER"	Sally, cook	mimeo	"Honey"	water	just dishes	3	place mats	wire rack	old farm tools or Elvis memorabilia
"EATS"	Blanche, some guy out back	bulletin board	"You guys"	optional	paper or plastic	on demand	Formica	catsup bottle	"We reserve the right..."

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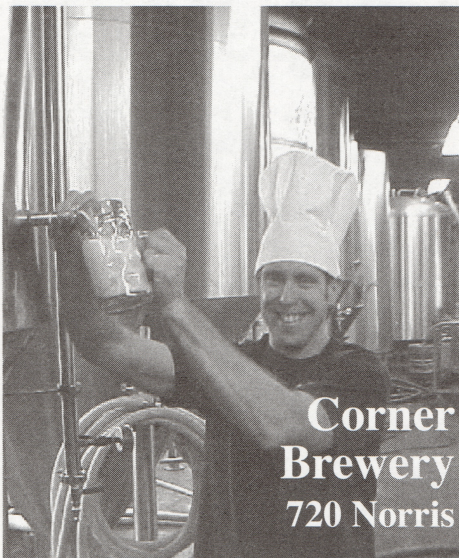
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Corner Brewery 720 Norris

Brewmaster Matt Gref (Chef Gref!) draws the freshest beer there is—right from the vat where it was brewed. Although Corner Brewery has simple bar snacks from their kitchen, all the neighborhood eateries keep menus at the bar and will deliver

February's raffle winner

is Tish Snyir, from Saline.

"It was my first time in Depot Town," she says, "and I filled out the coupon at Salt City Antiques. Sonya (at Salt City) should get a prize for suggesting it. We also shopped at Quinn's Essentials, Gordon's Five & Dime, the Nelson Amos Studio, and the Enchanted Florist. It was the day after Christmas," she remembers.

Snyir returned in January for dinner at the Sidetrack and plans to return again when her niece from North Carolina comes to visit. "We love your little shopping district down there," she says.

Snyir receives a \$25 gift certificate to spend at participating businesses in Depot Town.

Cul-in-ary or que-lin-ary?

Where you from, fella?

It is difficult to tell from restaurant reviews in the newspapers, but when they pronounce "culinary" on TV and slip in that phony French *que*-sound they are probably talking about something we can't afford anyway.

A quick and dirty poll of the district's chefs brought odd looks from every one. "How do you pronounce c-u-l-i-n-a-r-y?" we asked each cook on the block.

Most admitted they don't pronounce it at all. They call it cooking. They speak of food. They admit to flipping through cook books, and restaurateur* publications, but hoity-toity pronunciations just don't sell down here.

"Sometimes mothers like to say their kid is going off to some fancy "que-lin-ary" school when they feel they are competing with moms whos kids are going into law or medicine," says one chef who got his training in one of those programs. But his mom was not so insecure. She said "cul..."

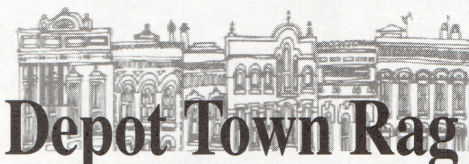
Students in the Culinary Arts Program at Washtenaw Community College disdain the Q-pronunciation but one recent drop-out claims the Cuisinart is really his cousin Arthur's margarita blender.

*Yes, that's how we spell it now: *restaurateur*, no *n*, very French. From the 19th century French "to provide food for," literally "restore to a former state." It has become nearly universal in usage but just a little uppity sounding for Depot Town. But locals like that "restore to a former state" part. Depot Towners may have discovered the same ethic when they preserved the old buildings on this block!



In the May Rag:

Ypsilanti helped put the world on wheels. How this little neighborhood has influenced the auto industry throughout modern history.



Depot Town Rag

"All the news that fits, we print"

A monthly publication of the Depot Town Association, Inc.

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Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197

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Website: www.depottown.org

DTA meets at 6:30 p.m on the third Wednesday of each month at Café Luwak, 42 East Cross Street.

Depot Town: Rated F



(family) for most of its long history with a few notable exceptions over the years: Lewis Horse Exchange, Ma Bush, God's Children MC, et al. If Vegas can come back, so can we.

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Hats off to Depot Town; but hats ON at the table

Yep; we still eat with our hats on down here

Long seen as a bastion of political incorrectness in defiance of Ann Arbor customs, many of Ypsi's Depot Towners insist on taking their meals without taking off their hats. Winter hats for outdoor warmth, summer baseball caps with the visor on the front, back, or side—folks who eat at the depot often leave their hats on at the table.

From the earliest days of railroaders in denim, red kerchief, and striped cap to contemporary tradesmen with pick-ups or vans parked out in front, our working class ethic seems not to have to dress for dinner.

But we are sticklers on other issues of politeness, however. In this block you'll hear "you're welcome," in response to a "thank you." That's a heck of a lot better than the "no problem" we hear in Tree Town. We draw the line there.

Where our chefs hang out:

Farmers' Markets bring back apostrophe lesson

Ypsilanti's Farmers' Market
Ypsilanti's Farmers' Market moved to Depot Town on August 4, 1979

There are two Ypsilanti Farmers' Markets now—the other is downtown in the Key Bank parking lot on Tuesdays—and that must be giving the daily and weekly papers fits. When the Market moved to the Freighthouse in the '70s, neither rag could get the apostrophes right. How many farmers and how many markets and how many Ypsilantis seemed beyond what reporters at that time could fathom. Only the kids at the *Eastern Echo* could figure it out.

Now we have two: "Ypsilanti's Farmers' Markets" and these are the rules:

One Ypsilanti (possessive) = 's

Many farmers (plural possessive) = s'

Two markets (plural) = no marks, just s

More hats at the table

Depot Town's turn-around was best realized by women strolling the sidewalks with baby strollers. Neighborhood activists from a generation ago saw their appearance as a harbinger of success in sanitizing the old railroad district. But nobody could have predicted today's onslaught of middle-aged women in those dowdy red hats.

"The Red Hat Society is a social club for older women that offers fun, laughter and fellowship," say their spokeswomen but who could have anticipated how they descended upon the block, bought up the gaudiest red hats and purple dresses available in our shops and then took over the front tables at every former railroad tavern in the district on pleasant afternoons?

If the Red Hatters were enrolled in local schools today, they would likely be expelled

by administrators more concerned with the *outsides* of their heads than the *insides*. Bless the biddies; they have *chutzpah*.

It may have been these excerpts from Jenny Joseph's poem, *Warning*, that inspires them:

*When I am an old woman
I shall wear purple
With a red hat which doesn't go,
and doesn't suit me,
And I shall spend my pension
on brandy and summer gloves...
...I shall sit down on the pavement
when I'm tired
And gobble up samples in shops
and press alarm bells....*



Dancing in the streets predicted

Ann Arbor may get its own Depot Town

There are still a few who can remember taking the train from Ann Arbor to the lakeside dance pavilion at Whitmore Lake. They may be able to do it again, but the pavilion is long gone. Some predict there will be dancing in the streets at each end.

Ann Arbor officials have been working with rail line owners to open that line again to establish six commuter round trips a day. They had hoped for a March opening of the service. Mayor Hieftje's original plan of an active line all the way to Howell is projected to take another three years.

With US-23 severely restricted due to construction in this spring and summer, new efforts were made to push the rail trips into reality.

The project is estimated to cost nearly \$2.4 million for its first six months. Just leveling the tracks from freight quality to passenger quality should cost \$193,000, according to a report in the *Ann Arbor News*.

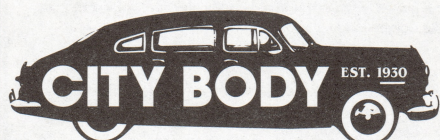
The State of Michigan owns the proposed rail line and is leasing it to Great Lakes Central Railroad owned by Louis Ferris and used for freight hauling at the present time.

A former 28-acre industrial site owned by Earl LaFave on Eight Mile Road is proposed for the Whitmore Lake station. Passengers would arrive in Ann Arbor near Plymouth Road at Barton. Ann Arbor Railroad officials still have not okayed use of their company's tracks that would extend into town, so AATA busses would make connections with various locations in downtown Ann Arbor and around the UM campus.

Developers are proposing six round trips a day, from 5:55 a.m. from Whitmore Lake to 3:55 p.m. from Ann Arbor. Ticket cost is estimated at \$120 per month.

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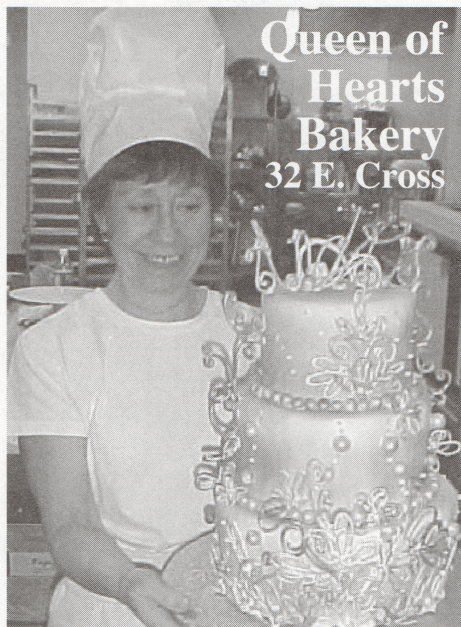


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Queen of Hearts Bakery

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Terry Morrow, owner of Queen of Hearts Pastries & Bakery, offers up a "fake cake," a dummy for her product display



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A² News getting more like The Rag? Beware of imitations

When the Ann Arbor News revealed its size and format changes in January, regular readers of the Depot Town Rag noticed how it was becoming more difficult to tell the difference between the two publications. The following observations may help a bit:

The News

PAGE DESIGN

Smaller, narrower, and thinner, but still a few inches larger than *USA Today*

The Rag

Broader, wider, more horizontal than any paper in the area—when inside section is fully opened

LOCAL NEWS SECTION

Now starts on page three

Always starts on page one

WEATHER

Moved to a different back page for unfortunate shut-ins in basement apartments.

City ordinance prohibits underground, windowless apartments. Readers look out window to assess weather conditions

TV "NEWS"

Copious listings of TV channels where "newscasters" read newspapers aloud

None; turn off the TV and read your own newspaper

PROFESSIONALISM

A big city chain newspaper produced by professionals who write stories for a living (hundreds of them, but shrinking every year)

A neighborhood newsletter put together by amateurs: one editor, one proofreader/delivery person, one hometown printer (a professional)

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Sidetrack Bar & Grill

56 E. Cross

National Hero!

Chef Armando Lopez gets ready for lunch at the Sidetrack. Included in "the 20 Hamburgers You Must Eat Before You Die." *GQ* magazine's Alan Richman traveled 23,750 miles and consumed more than 150,000 calories while taking the measure of 162 burgers across the country—with one goal: "To find you the best damned assemblage of ground beef and buns this country serves up."

Full disclosure:

Observant Depot Town Rag readers will note that all the chefs in this issue are wearing the traditional chef's toque. More careful observers will note that it's the same toque in every picture.



This traditional chef's hat was a photographer's prop. Most Depot Town chefs wear baseball caps. Some wear them backwards. Or sideways. Or just crooked. But they all wear hats when they cook.

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